

Early roof replacement after shingles wear prematurely

MARV BALOUSEK of madison.com

May 4, 2006

Nancy Hollis said she noticed about a year ago that some of her neighbors in DeForest's Sunrise Estates subdivision were getting new roofs even though their homes were barely a dozen years old.

When her husband checked their roof, he noticed the shingles were curling even though they carry a 25-year warranty.

"Every single house has the same (brand of) shingles and they're all falling apart," she said. "Every single home has to have a new roof."

That shingle is the Horizon Shingle, a mid-range product from CertainTeed, a Pennsylvania company.

More than 50 homes are in the Sunrise Estates subdivision, and other area subdivisions built in the early 1990s also could be affected.

Kris Sturman, an owner of Mad City Roofing, Siding and Windows, 5018 Voges Road, said the Horizon Shingle was commonly used in southern Wisconsin during those years and his company has replaced roofs where they were cracking or curling.

"It just could be a bad run in the shingles," he said. "You could have a bad run in shingles for a couple of years because the problem isn't seen right away."

The old Horizon Shingle was cardboard covered by asphalt while the company's New Horizon shingle uses a fiberglass core, said Doug Grenier, owner of Cardinal Roofing & Construction of Sun Prairie.

"They're just prematurely failing," he said of the Horizon Shingle. "They're just curling up and coming apart. It was something in how they made them."

Although improper installation can cause roofs to fail, Grenier, who has bid on some Sunrise Estates replacement jobs, said the roofs were installed correctly.

Homeowners with concerns about their CertainTeed shingles can call 800-345-1145 and receive an information packet on how to file a claim, said Mike Loughery, the company's communications manager.

"Occasionally when you have a roof production run, the specs might be off or something like that," he said. "That could be a possibility. It would be hard not having the shingles to know if it's something like that."

Loughery said Wisconsin's harsh winters also could reduce shingle life. He said cracks in the shingle's overlay pad are cosmetic while cracks in the base of the shingle can cause problems. He said the Horizon Shingle, an "organic" shingle with a paper-based membrane, has had problems.

"A lot of manufacturers had problems with organic shingles in the mid-90s with having them perform at a superior level," he said. "The advent of fiberglass shingles makes them much stronger. All manufacturers have abandoned organic shingles and we're in the process of switching our product."

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection has received 43 complaints about CertainTeed shingles, which spokesman Glen Loyd said is a lot of complaints on something as costly as a new roof.

One of those complaints came a year ago from Tom Chorney of Waunakee, who works as tennis director at the Cherokee Country Club.

Chorney, whose home was built in 1993, said he spent over \$6,000 for a new roof and received a rebate of \$700 from CertainTeed for the defective shingles.

"They (the shingles) went to pot pretty fast in 2004," he said. "Based on their prorated warranty, it ended up being so little that it wasn't worth the trouble. They don't make it easy for you."

Chorney said getting money back requires homeowners to send two damaged shingles and roof photos to CertainTeed.

Ryan Stanek, a neighbor of Nancy Hollis who's owned his 1992 house for five years, said he has some experience in the roofing business and plans to replace the roof himself. He said it won't be possible to reroof over the old shingles.

"They're wrinkly and they're so rolled up they have to be torn up," he said. "Some shingles are back-folding."

Similar problems with the Horizon Shingle have been reported in at least a dozen states including Minnesota and Pennsylvania.

In Washington, Pacific Coast Building Products, a Seattle company that used to manufacture CertainTeed shingles, agreed in 2003 to reimburse customers who bought Horizon Shingles and a later brand called HO-25 since 1990 after a lawsuit was filed by the Washington state attorney general. Customers complained the shingles cracked, curled and blistered and that the company failed to fix the problem.

Warning signs of a failing roof

Warning signs of a roof in need of replacement are discoloration of shingles, mold or moss, curling or cracking and lots of shingle granules in roof gutters, said Kris Sturman, an owner of Mad City Roofing, 5018 Voges Road.

He said sometimes it's difficult to inspect the roof from the ground, but roofing companies offer inspections at a nominal cost or no cost if the inspection leads to a roof replacement.

Shingles can range in price from \$25 to \$140 per 100 square feet. Sturman said the cheapest shingles won't hold up to Wisconsin's temperature extremes.

"It's a smart decision to upgrade your shingles," he said. "The installation cost is about the same."

The longer a homeowner waits to replace a failing roof, the more problems can arise, Sturman said. Sheathing, the wood layer under the shingles, can rot and is expensive to replace. Leaks can damage walls and ceilings inside a home.

"One of the biggest reasons shingles fail is they don't have proper ventilation," he said, which is a sign of improper installation.

He advises homeowners to read shingle warranties closely when they buy a new roof. Warranties often don't include the cost of labor, which at \$6,000 or more is the most expensive part of replacing a roof.

Warranties also are prorated for how long the roof takes to fail so although shingles may have a 25-year warranty, homeowners may only receive a few hundred dollars if they replace the roof after 10 years or more.